INDICATIONS OF TEMPORARY TRANSVENOUS PACING

KENNETH CHIN
K.T. SINGHAM
ANUAR MASDUKI

SUMMARY

A retrospective study of the indications for temporary transvenous pacing in the University Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, from 1971 to 1979 is reviewed. There were 111 patients. The main indications for temporary transvenous pacing were, namely, complete heart block (57%), sick sinus syndrome (24%), Mobitz type II block (5%) and bifascicular block (3%).

INTRODUCTION

Temporary transvenous endocardial pacing is a useful therapeutic modality in the coronary care unit. Since 1958, when Furman and Robinson described the technique, the clinical indications for temporary transvenous pacing has been increasingly expanding. The recent indications include prophylactic pacing management of bradycardia and tachyarrhythmia, and pacing to stabilise haemodynamics in severe congestive cardiac failure.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The clinical records of all patients who required the insertion of a temporary transvenous pacemaker in the University Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, from 1971 to 1979 were reviewed. Multiple routes of insertion were used, including percutaneous subclavian or femoral vein puncture and antecubital cutdown. All temporary pacing were performed in the cardiac catheterization laboratory. Bipolar electrode catheters were used and operated in the demand mode. The catheter tip was positioned in the right ventricular apex under fluoroscopic control. The patients were thereafter monitored in the coronary care unit.

RESULTS

111 patients were reviewed. There were 64 male (58%) and 47 (42%) female patients. The male:female ratio is 1:1. There were 49 Chinese (44%), 33 Malay (30%), 27 Indian (24%) and two Caucasian patients. The ages ranged from 14 to 85 years, as illustrated in Figure 1.

The main indications for temporary pacing were complete heart block and sick sinus syndrome as shown in Table I. One patient had first degree heart block with cardiac failure, uncontrolled by medication.

The aetiological factors for complete heart block requiring temporary pacing, are shown in Table II. Coronary artery disease is the commonest cause (50%) of complete heart block requiring temporary...
Aetiological factors associated with Mobitz type II and bifascicular block are as shown in Table II. Patients with sick sinus syndrome were classified according to Rubenstein. There were two patients with sinus bradycardia (type I), 15 patients with sinus arrest or sinoatrial block (type II), and 10 patients with tachycardia-bradycardia syndrome (type III).

Common presenting symptoms were dizziness, syncope, chest pain and cardiac failure as shown in Table III. Ten patients had seizures, while five had cerebrovascular accident.

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indications</th>
<th>No. of Patients</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete Heart Block</td>
<td>74 (67%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sick Sinus Syndrome</td>
<td>27 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobitz Type II Block</td>
<td>6 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bifascicular Block</td>
<td>3 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Degree Heart Block</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DISCUSSION**

The majority of the patients requiring temporary pacing is in the 50 to 70 year age group as shown in figure 1. This age group comprised mainly of patients with coronary artery disease with complete heart block. In the 20 to 40 year age group, temporary pacing was performed predominantly in patients with sick
sinus syndrome. The age distribution in this study is quite in contrast to that reported by the Hynes et al.,10 from the Mayo Clinic where only 7.5% patients were younger than 50-years-old.

In comparing age with aetiological factors in advanced heart block, coronary artery disease was the main cause of advanced heart block in patients above 40 years. In those patients below the age of 40, the causes were mainly idiopathic and acute nonspecific carditis. A comparable age aetiological relationship had been reported by Penton et al.,11 Advanced heart block in acute nonspecific carditis had been reported to be an uncommon feature.12-14

As shown in Table I, the commonest indication for temporary pacing is complete heart block (67%) while sick sinus syndrome accounts for another 24%. The ratio of temporary pacing for complete heart block to that of sick sinus syndrome is 2.7 : 1. A comparable ratio has been reported by other authors.10,15 However, the pattern of indication of pacing has been progressively changing in other centres, with an increasing number of patients with sick sinus syndrome.16

Until about 1970, most physicians and surgeons would have considered carefully whether to implant a pacemaker in the absence of demonstrated Adams-Stokes seizures. Gradually a variety of minor neurologic lapses and prophylactic indications have become dominant.

The pharmacologic treatment of sinus arrest and syncope has been unsatisfactory.17,18 The experience with sympathomimetic is that they increase the rate of a bradycardia but frequently produce a tachycardia.9

During complete heart block, cardiac function is markedly reduced, the ventricular rate is slow, usually between 30 to 40 per minute19 with episodes of even slower rates or arrest. The cardiac output is reduced and is maintained by maximum stroke volume.20 The arteriovenous oxygen difference is also increased.21 Atroventricular dissociation and asynchrony is associated with cyclic reduction of systemic and pulmonary pressures and outputs. Ventricular pacing ameliorates all the functional disturbances except the A – V dissociation.

Pacing is also indicated in lesser degree of fixed A – V block because of the possibility of intermittent complete heart block with asystole, and/or ventricular tachycardia and fibrillation and syncope or sudden death. Bifascicular block with right bundle branch block with left anterior22 or left posterior hemiblock23 is ominous, and require urgent pacing.

REFERENCES

7 Escher DJW, Schweder JB, Eisenberg R. Cardiovascular Dynamic Responses to Artificial Pacing of Patients in Heart Block (D) (Abstract). Circulation 1961; 24: 928.


